



## Foster Policies and Procedures Manual

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Bureau of Animal Regulation and Care 📍 3200 Carr Street 🐾 Houston, TX 77026  
Shelter Services: 713.229.7300

Email Contact: [BARCfoster@houstontx.gov](mailto:BARCfoster@houstontx.gov)  
Website: [www.houstonbarc.com](http://www.houstonbarc.com)

We are BARC. We care deeply about animals.

## BARC Vision

“Our vision is to be the nationally recognized model of excellence in animal care and placement where City governments throughout the United States see BARC as the beacon of best practices dedicated to delivering humane, efficient and high quality service.”

## BARC Mission

“Our mission is to promote humane animal care and protect Public Health and Safety in the City of Houston, including shelter, pet placement, ownership, education and enforcement. Critical to our mission is excellence in everything we do.”

## Welcome

Welcome to the Bureau of Animal Regulation and Care (BARC) Foster Program! Nearly any shelter animal can benefit from foster care. BARC manages a volunteer foster care program for volunteers to care for sick, or immature animals in their homes, or to take in animals when our shelter is full.

### Here are the most common reasons animals need a foster home:

- Orphaned kittens and puppies that are too young to be adopted, some may need to be bottle-fed.
- Under-aged, self-feeding kittens and puppies (4-8 weeks old)
- Mother cat or dog with nursing kittens or puppies
- Animals recovering from injury or illness (may need medication)
- A dog or cat that needs socialization and tender loving care.
- A pet that might need additional medical treatment (like heartworm treatment)
- Healthy animals waiting for space within our shelter

We take great care to match the animal to you and your situation. Some animals may need fostering for only a few days while others may need to be in your home for much longer. Again, we work with you to ensure that you are comfortable with the animal, its needs and the expected timeline for fostering.

With additional foster parents, many more shelter animals can be adopted, and ultimately find their forever homes. We thank you for your interest fostering a BARC animal, and hope you will join us in our efforts.

### How Do Foster Care Volunteers Help?

- Foster care volunteers feed, groom, socialize, train, and sometimes medicate an animal during its stay in the foster home.
- BARC pays for most veterinary care and medicine the animal needs during its stay in foster care. Foster parents are responsible for providing food, time, and tender loving care.
- When the animal is healthy and ready to be adopted, various programs are available to promote adoptions. Foster parents are given the first choice to adopt their foster animal,

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provided they meet the basic adoption requirements. BARC can post the animal's story and photograph and promote adoption through our various off-site adoption locations.

- Foster parents have the option to meet all potential adopters. Sometimes, the foster animals may be adopted straight from the foster home, returning to the Shelter only if the animal requires spay or neutering services. Shelter adoption guidelines are followed at all times.

## Important Considerations

There are a number of things you should consider and discuss with the rest of your family prior to submitting an application to foster with BARC:

- Will you have enough time to spend with your foster animal? Most of the animals needing foster care will be in a great need of quality time and TLC. Socializing is very important, especially with young animals. The more time spent with your foster animal, the better the chance for a successful and permanent adoption to a forever home.
- Do you have pets of your own? Very young animals have limited immunity and are more susceptible to possible infections carried by older animals. Keeping your foster animals in a separate room with no carpet works best.
- It is a requirement of the Foster program that you keep all foster animals indoors. Garages and enclosed patios will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Do you have the time to clean up after your foster animals? Keeping animals and their living areas clean will help prevent illness and stress. Remember, young animals are usually doing one of the four things: Eating, sleeping, playing, going potty.
- Will you be able to keep a close watch on the foster animal's health? There is always the possibility that the animal you are fostering may die if health complications arise. As a foster, it will be your responsibility to monitor and report any concerns or signs of illness to BARC staff immediately. The Foster Care Coordinators may need you to bring the animal in for an unscheduled examination. If it is deemed that your foster animal needs veterinary attention, the Coordinator will make the appointment. BARC will pay for all veterinary care for foster animals that have been approved in advance by appropriate shelter staff (Executive Director or Foster Care Coordinators).
- Will you be emotionally able to return the animal to BARC after the foster period is over? This can sometimes be the hardest thing to do. It's easy to become very attached to your foster animal.

Letting go of the foster animal can be emotionally draining at first. Keep in mind, the more you foster, the more animals you help place into new homes.

## **BARC Foster Care Program**

BARC staff and volunteers share the values of professionalism, responsibility, compassion, commitment, integrity, and accountability with our community partners. These values are exhibited through:

- Providing animal care services that minimize fear, pain, stress and suffering to animals in and out of the shelter
- Providing safe and healthy human-animal interactions
- Providing humane, efficient, high-quality care of animals in our shelter
- Promoting responsible pet ownership including licensing, vaccinations, and spaying/neutering
- Promoting compassion toward animals in and out of the shelter

### **Volunteer Qualifications**

- Foster parents provide a safe, loving and stable environment for the foster animal.
- Experience with animal behavioral or medical issues is a plus, but is not necessary.
- Foster parents possess common sense and patience, as well as be willing to nurse any injury and/or illness — with the understanding that some issues may result in the death of an animal.
- Foster parents transport their foster animal to and from BARC during business hours, for any Veterinarian clinic needs.
- Attendance at Foster Care Volunteer Orientation.

Foster Care Volunteer orientations are free, and attending an orientation session does not obligate you to foster an animal.

Foster Care Volunteer orientations are held at BARC, in the administration building classroom. BARC Animal Shelter & Adoptions is located at 3200 Carr Street, Houston, TX 77025.

To learn more about the BARC foster care program, and to find out more information about foster care volunteer orientations, call us at 713-229-7300.

## **Bureau of Animal Regulation and Care - Policy Statement**

### **Services BARC offers**

- Sheltering Animals
- Spaying and Neutering of Adoptable Animals
- Animal Control Services
- Pet Licensing
- Vaccinations

### **Hours of Operation**

- Animal Adoption Center (to adopt a dog or cat)

Tues - Wed:	11:30 am - 5:30 pm
Thurs:	11:30 am - 7:00 pm
Fri:	11:30 am - 5:30 pm
Sat:	12:00 pm - 6:00 pm
Sun:	12:00 pm - 4:00 pm

- Clinic Hours for Fosters:

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday: 11:30 am-4 pm (closed 1pm – 2pm for lunch)  
Saturday: Noon – 4pm

### **Contact Information**

Bureau of Animal Regulation and Care  
3200 Carr  
Houston, TX 77026  
Shelter Services: 713-229-7300  
[www.houstonbarc.com](http://www.houstonbarc.com)  
Coordinator: [barcfoster@houstontx.gov](mailto:barcfoster@houstontx.gov)

## **Foster Policies and Procedures**

### **Foster Policy**

The Bureau of Animal Regulation and Care (BARC) Foster Program seeks to provide supplemental care to animals with special needs, to decrease the rate of euthanasia, to increase the rate of animal adoptions, and to expand public relations within the community.

Foster care may be provided to animals that:

- Require socialization and/or training
- Have temporary health problems (e.g. malnourished, healing wound, etc.)
- Are too young or ill to be adopted, or are pregnant or nursing
- Have a temporary condition affecting their physical appearance (e.g. an animal that needs to be shaved, has ringworm, mange, etc.)
- Suffer from kennel / cage stress
- May be euthanized for lack of shelter space

### **Foster Requirements**

To become an Approved Foster, a volunteer must:

- Submit a BARC Foster Application.
- Be 18 years or older.
- Show proper identification.
- Be able to provide a safe, loving and stable environment for the foster animal.
- Be willing to nurse an injury and/or illness — with the understanding that some issues may result in the death of an animal.
- Be able to transport the foster animal to and from BARC during normal BARC business hours.
- Complete an interview with the Foster/Rescue Coordinator.
- If applicable, provide proof that their landlord allows companion animals.
- Be approved by the Community Involvement Coordinator.
- Sign the BARC Foster Agreement.

An applicant may be refused Approved Foster status if, among other things, he/she:

- Demonstrates or acts in an aggressive or cruel manner towards an animal in the presence of a BARC employee or volunteer.
- Was convicted, suspected or under investigation for animal cruelty.
- Has left dead animals on property.
- Has left an animal in a vehicle in extreme weather conditions that caused death to the animal.
- Has a home environment that is not conducive to fostering a companion animal.
- Has one or more members of the household who do not want animals.
- Clearly states that he/she or a member of the household is allergic to animals.
- Has repeatedly violated license, at-large or nuisance provisions of municipal, county or state code.
- Cannot provide the animal with proper care, or cannot keep the animal confined or contained.
- Appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

- Indicates that a pet recently died of an infectious disease that could risk the health of a foster animal.
- Previously fostered from BARC and did not honor the Foster Agreement.
- Previously refused to return an animal as requested by BARC.

**When you become an Approved Foster, we ask that you abide by the following guidelines:**

- Adhere to all BARC policies and procedures.
- Respond within 24 hours to communications from BARC staff or potential adopters.
- Immediately report to BARC staff any aggressive behavior by the foster animal.
- Respect the premises by returning them to orderly condition after use.
- Inform the Community Involvement Coordinator regarding concerns about animal health, safety, and facility conditions as well as issues that need improvement. Fosters may also submit suggestions and concerns by email to [BARCfosters@cityofhouston.net](mailto:BARCfosters@cityofhouston.net).
- Provide changes in your BARC Foster Application personal information (i.e. name, address, phone, e-mail, household occupancy) to the Community Involvement Coordinator in a timely manner so that all records can be kept up to date.

**Foster Procedures**

- Processing of Animals
  - Potential foster animals are processed according to normal BARC intake procedures.
- Each animal will be tested for heartworms or FELV/FIV and given vaccines, in accordance with regular intake protocol.
- Selection of Animals
  - Community Involvement Coordinator may contact Fosters by phone or email when potential foster animals are identified.
- Potential foster animals will be posted on foster web groups.
- Approved Fosters may tour BARC or review the BARC website to select an animal to foster.
- Pick Up of Foster Animal
  - The Foster should visit BARC and sign in at the front desk. The Foster/Rescue Coordinator or designee will be notified.
  - Appointments are encouraged but not required.
- The Foster/Rescue Coordinator will assist the foster with the retrieval of foster animals, if necessary. The foster may tour the facility to locate additional foster animals.
- Foster may consult with veterinary staff for advice on the care of the animal or to have a Microchip inserted.
- Foster should visit the Customer Service counter, where the foster arrangement will be recorded. All foster arrangements will be reviewed every 90 days. If an animal remains in foster care after 90 days, one of the following must occur:
  - Foster may personally adopt the animal from BARC and pay applicable adoption fee;
  - Foster identifies and presents a possible adopter to BARC for adoption facilitation; or
  - Foster returns the animal to BARC.



- Adoptions
 

Animals in foster care are available to the public for adoption.

  - Fosters are encouraged to bring their animals to off-site adoption events when the animals have recovered their health and vitality. Please notify the Foster/Rescue Coordinator or Adoptions Coordinator if you would like to bring a fostered animal to an off-site adoption event. Then bring your animal into BARC during clinic hours for a check-up with the veterinarian and to update their kennel card information with their new healthy status. This allows us to ensure that the animal is fully recovered and ready for any adoption event. There is a schedule of off-site adoption events to choose from posted on [www.HoustonBARC.com](http://www.HoustonBARC.com). Please notify the Foster/Rescue Coordinator or Adoptions Coordinator if you plan to bring a Foster animal to an off-site adoption event; 48 hours notice is appreciated.
  - If BARC locates an adopter, the Foster will be notified and required to return the animal to BARC.
  - Fosters are permitted to adopt animals in their care, if they qualify under the normal BARC adoption guidelines. To adopt an animal, the Foster must come to BARC or attend an off-site BARC Adoption event to complete the BARC Adoption Application and pay applicable adoption fees.
  - If the Foster identifies a potential adopter for the animal, the Foster should instruct the potential adopter to come to BARC or to attend an off-site BARC adoption event to complete the BARC Adoption Application and pay applicable adoption fees.
- Transfers to Rescue Groups
  - All transfers of foster animals between Fosters and Rescue Groups must be administered by BARC.
  - If a Foster desires to transfer a foster animal to a Rescue Group, the Foster must return to BARC to submit the paperwork necessary to relinquish responsibility for the animal. The Rescue Group must then complete the standard rescue transfer process.
- Reclaimed Animals
  - If an animal is reclaimed by its owner, the Foster must return the animal to BARC. Expenses incurred by the Foster may or may not be reimbursed by the owner.
- Death of a Foster Animal
  - Foster should notify the Community Involvement Coordinator if an animal dies while in the Foster's care.
- Return of Foster Animals
  - If, for any reason, a Foster can no longer provide care for the foster animal, the Foster may return the animal to BARC during normal business hours.

### **Care of Foster Animals**

- Unless surrendered by the owner, animals must be held at BARC for three full business days after arrival (the "Impoundment Period").
- Nonetheless, animals may be placed in foster care prior to the end of the Impoundment Period for medical reasons ("Medical Release"). Conditions that may justify a Medical Release include:
  - Upper respiratory infection
  - Ringworm

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- High heartworm positive status
  - Puppies or kittens five months old or younger
  - Neonatal
  - Pregnancy
  - Having been hit by a car and/or having broken bones
  - Mange (sarcoptic)
- If a Foster picks up an animal prior to the end of the Impoundment Period under a Medical Release, the Foster may not spay or neuter the animal or perform other non-essential surgeries before the end of the three full days.
  - Foster may bring the animal to the BARC veterinary office during normal foster clinic hours for evaluation and care. There is no charge associated with veterinary care administered at BARC for foster animals, remember to bring the kennel card with you for all vet clinic appointments.
    - Veterinary services provided at BARC include:
      - Routine vaccinations.
      - Dewormer as needed (every two weeks).
      - Heartworm testing and FELV/FIV testing.
      - Sterilization.
      - Insertion of Microchip.
      - Care of minor illnesses treatable with antibiotics.
  - Except for the limited menu of veterinary services provided at no charge at BARC, the Foster is responsible for the care and expenses of care of all foster animals.
  - Foster animals may be taken to the Foster's private veterinarian at the expense of the Foster. Fosters must provide the Foster/Rescue Coordinator copies of records regarding any veterinary care a foster animal receives outside of BARC.

### **Privacy**

- Any information pertaining to BARC records and cases which you may become privileged to (including names, addresses, phone numbers, etc.) as a result of your affiliation with BARC is confidential and may not be discussed with others, except as may be required by law.
- Under some circumstances, BARC staff may be prohibited from discussing with you certain specific details regarding cases that are under investigation or pending criminal court action.
- Your residential address and residential phone number will not be disclosed or provided to anyone unless specifically authorized by you or as may be required by law.

### **Animal Safety**

- We ask that you follow strictly all BARC policies related to animal and people safety.
- You are required to wash your hands and/or change your gloves before and after each animal encounter, after cleaning animal cages or animal-care areas, and after contact with feces, blood, body fluids, secretions, excretions, exudates, or articles contaminated by these substances.
- In the Adoption Center, Fosters must use a hand sanitizer after each animal contact.

### **Accidents or Injury Reporting**

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- All accidents or injuries sustained by you at BARC MUST be reported immediately to the Community Involvement Coordinator. A bite or scratch is considered an injury and must be treated immediately.
- You are required to fill out an accident or injury report for every incident. THERE ARE NO EXCEPTIONS.
- In an emergency situation, please focus on safety first!
- When treating an animal bite, you should:
  - Notify the Foster/Rescue Coordinator.
  - Flush the bite and surrounding area with soap and water or peroxide followed by water.
  - Fill out a Bite Report. The Bite Case unit will need this information to complete its investigation.
  - We encourage you to seek medical attention from your primary physician.

### **Resignations and Terminations**

- If you choose to leave the BARC Foster Program, please notify the Community Involvement Coordinator to be removed from the Approved Foster list.
- BARC can elect to terminate or suspend your participation in the BARC Foster Program. Reasons for termination can include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - Failure to follow the BARC Foster Agreement and guidelines indicated in this policy
  - Inhumane treatment or mistreatment of animals
  - Misconduct with or abuse of staff, volunteers or citizens
  - Falsification of BARC records, including the Foster Application
  - Insubordination
  - Theft
  - Possession of drugs or alcohol
  - Use of or being under the influence of alcohol or drugs while at BARC or BARC-related events
  - Presence in off-limit areas at BARC
  - Failure to return animals as requested by BARC
  - Deliberate destruction of BARC's or an individual's property
  - Possession of unauthorized weapons or dangerous materials on the BARC facility or at BARC-related events
  - Any other justifiable reason deemed appropriate by the Community Involvement Coordinator

### **Grievance Procedure**

- If you are terminated from the BARC Foster Program, you have the right to appeal to BARC management.
- A written request for an appeal should be sent to the BARC Bureau Chief, Bureau of Animal Regulation and Care, 3200 Carr Street, Houston, Texas 77026.

## FAQ – Cat Fosters

### 1. *How long do foster cases last? How much time does fostering take on a daily basis?*

It completely depends on the cat and the situation. The average stay in a foster home is about 30 days, from treatment to adoption. Others, recovering from an injury, or senior cats, may stay longer, or take more effort to get adopted. To give you an idea of the daily time commitment, please see the information in the table below.

Daily Hours (estimate)	
Cats with a cold	2-3 hours
Anxiety in a cattery	2-3 hours
Weaned kittens	3-6 hours
Injured cats	2-3 hours
Baby bottle kittens	8 hours
Behavior cases	2-4 hours
Mom with kittens	3 hours
Cruelty victim	3 hours

### 2. *What supplies are needed to foster? How much will it cost?*

Foster parents provide space, food and love for the cat. The shelter may provide you with some other supplies, meds and equipment (as available) needed throughout your foster experience.

### 3. *Do I need to have prior medical knowledge or expertise?*

No, but you may be asked to dispense medicine to your foster cat so you will have to be comfortable following the Veterinarian's instructions if fostering a sick or injured cat.

### 4. *What if my foster cat becomes sick?*

Most of the veterinary costs are paid by the shelter. If a foster cat becomes sick, foster parents should bring the cat to the Shelter for a vet visit, or may use their own private vet (at their own expense).

### 5. *If I have my own animals, can I foster cats?*

Yes, but keep in mind that it's always a health risk to expose your animal to other animals. The health risk is minimal if your animals are current on their vaccinations, maintain a healthy diet and lifestyle, and are not elderly or very young. If you or someone in your household is immune-compromised, consult your doctor before fostering since working or living with animals exposes humans to a group of diseases called zoonoses. A zoonotic disease (there are about 200) is defined as a disease transmitted from animals to humans and also from humans to animals. To find out more about zoonoses, talk to your doctor and/or veterinarian. Proper hygiene, preventative measures and an understanding of these illnesses can reduce the risk of disease.

### 6. *What if I have children?*

Fostering is a wonderful family experience and can build a foundation of philanthropy in your children. It's important to select a cat that is "age" appropriate with your children. You must also be diligent about providing guidance, instructions and rules to your children about caring for an orphaned cat.

*7. Can I adopt my foster cat?*

YES! As long as foster parents meet the shelter requirements necessary for adoption, foster parents have first choice to adopt their foster cat.

*8. How are foster cats promoted?*

Foster cats can be promoted at weekly off-site adoption events throughout the city by the foster parent's attendance at one of these sites. Foster parents can also help promote their foster cat to their family, friends, colleagues and the general public through a variety of means including flyers, emails and social networking sites.

*9. How can I help my foster cat become more adoptable?*

There are two ways to make a foster cat more adoptable.

First and foremost is marketing. If no one knows about your foster cat, or how wonderful it is, then it will be next to impossible to find them a forever home. In addition to supplying great photos and a bio and updating these regularly, giving a foster cat additional exposure by telling friends and family about them will help create a "network effect" and will speed up the process of finding a forever home.

*10. Can I return my foster cat to the shelter if I am unable to foster any longer?*

We prefer that foster parents continue to foster until a permanent home is found for their foster cat. It's extremely stressful for a cat to be returned to the shelter environment, and they may be exposed to illness in the shelter. However, we understand that situations change and it may become necessary to discontinue fostering a cat. We request that a foster parent provides as much notice as possible (minimum 1-2 weeks) so that we can find an alternative foster home for the cat. Of course, in an emergency a foster parent may always bring their cat back to the shelter. Our staff performs follow-up calls at 30 and 45 days and can provide additional resources and ideas for you to promote the adoption of your foster cat(s).

*11. What if I go on vacation or have a business trip?*

If given enough notice, we can usually find volunteers that can foster sit for short durations. We ask that foster parents always keep their case managers aware of any temporary foster sitting situations.

*12. Are foster cats ever euthanized?*

Much energy, love, time and vet care is devoted to our foster cats, and the shelter is committed to finding homes for ALL the adoptable cats within its care. Some cats are in foster care because they're seriously ill or injured. If, after medical attention, these cats are too young or too weak to heal and are suffering, then the shelter staff will humanely euthanize these animals. Fortunately, most cats in foster care heal beautifully. Your safety is our #1 priority. You must

always inform the shelter staff if your foster cat exhibits any aggressive or questionable behavior.

## **FAQ – Dog Fosters**

### *1. How long are dogs in foster homes?*

It completely depends on the dog and the situation. The average stay in a foster home is about 30-45 days. However, most puppies and some dogs may stay only a few weeks. Others, recovering from an injury, certain breeds and senior dogs, may stay much longer.

### *2. Can I adopt my foster dog?*

YES! As long as foster parents meet the shelter requirements necessary for adoption, foster parents have first choice to adopt their foster dog.

### *3. How are foster dogs promoted?*

Photos and stories of all adoptable dogs in foster homes are posted on Petfinder.com and at the shelter where the public can view them. Foster dogs are also promoted at special events throughout the year. Foster parents may participate in various shelter programs and events to increase the visibility of their foster dog to potential adopters. Foster parents can also help promote their foster dog to their family, friends, colleagues and the general public through a variety of means including flyers, emails and even just by walking your foster dog in local neighborhoods with an “I’m available” bandana around its neck.

### *4. What is the process for adopting a foster dog?*

The process is very similar to adopting a dog from the shelter. The steps are briefly outlined below:

- Potential adopters are required to submit an adoption application for review before they can physically meet a foster dog.
- Suitable applicants may be contacted for additional screening.
- Once approved, meet and greets with the foster dog and foster parents will be scheduled with qualified applicants.
- After the meet and greet (and if the applicant is still interested in the dog), foster parents will make a recommendation to the shelter staff regarding the adoption. The foster dog stays with the foster parent until they hear from the shelter staff.
- Adoption is approved or rejected by shelter staff. Final approval of all adoptions is at the sole discretion of the BARC staff.
- Once approved, the adopter pays adoption fees to the shelter and makes a spay/neuter appointment, if necessary. Foster dogs cannot go to a potential adopter’s home until the adoption is official and approved by shelter staff. Foster dog then goes to its new forever home.
- Foster parents should stay in contact with the BARC staff for assistance with the adoption process.

### *5. I live in a condo, townhome, or apartment, can I foster dogs?*

Yes, you can still foster a dog living in a small environment. Many of our dogs need one-on-one

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socialization, so a small space can be beneficial. However it's important that you select an appropriate dog for your lifestyle and are willing to commit to providing your foster dog with the needed physical and mental stimulation. And of course, you still need landlord approval and must abide by any weight or breed restrictions.

#### *6. What if I have children?*

Fostering is a wonderful family experience and can build a foundation of philanthropy in your children. It's important to select a dog that is "age" appropriate with your children, and as a general rule, children under 16 years old should NOT be left alone and unsupervised with any dog. You must also be diligent about providing guidance, instructions and rules to your children about caring for an orphaned dog.

#### *7. I don't have a yard, or it's not fenced, can I foster dogs?*

Yes! A yard is a nice□to□have for those early morning, or late night potty breaks and for a game of ball, but is not a requirement. Moreover, foster dogs are not allowed to be left unattended in a yard. The reality is that dogs don't exercise themselves when left outside. Unfortunately many of the dogs we see at the shelter were "yard-dogs" and developed behavior issues like fence running, barking, or digging because they were left alone in a backyard. Dogs need focused physical activity, mental stimulation and socialization and the best way to do this is by walking or running your foster dog on leash.

#### *8. If I have my own animals, can I foster dogs?*

Yes, but keep in mind that it's always a health risk to expose your animal to other animals whether it's walking at parks, vet waiting rooms or other common animal areas. The health risk is minimal if your animals are current on their vaccinations, maintains a healthy diet and lifestyle, and are not elderly or very young.

If you or someone in your household is immune-compromised, consult your doctor before fostering since working or living with animals exposes humans to a group of diseases called zoonoses. A zoonotic disease (there are about 200) is defined as a disease transmitted from animals to humans and also from humans to animals. To find out more about zoonoses, talk to your doctor and/or veterinarian. Proper hygiene, preventative measures and an understanding of these illnesses can reduce the risk of disease.

#### *9. What supplies are needed to foster?*

Foster parents provide space, food, basic training, exercise and love for the dog. The shelter may provide you with some other supplies and equipment needed throughout your foster experience. The Foster Dog Program receives donated items regularly, and the Help the Animals Fund pays for vet care and medicine.

#### *10. Do I have to crate - train my foster dog?*

No, but it is one of the most efficient and effective ways to house train a puppy or re-train an adult dog. Some dogs do not like crates, and most dogs need to be transitioned or "trained" to use a crate, so it's up to the foster parent to decide whether to crate or not. Putting the dog in a crate while you are gone will give you peace of mind knowing that they are in a safe place, away from harm, and not doing any damage to your belongings or themselves. For many dogs, a



crate can also represent a safe and comfortable place to call their own and provides them with a sense of security. Dogs actually like having a “den” to cuddle up in. Crating should never be used as punishment.

*11. Do I need to have prior medical knowledge or expertise?*

No, but you may be asked to dispense medicine to your foster dog so you will have to be comfortable following veterinarian’s instructions if fostering a sick or injured dog.

*12. What if my foster dog becomes sick?*

Some veterinary services are provided by BARC. Visit BARC with your foster pet during our clinic hours for a consultation and treatment plan provided by one of our Veterinarian staff.

*13. How much time each day is needed to foster?*

Commitment and responsibilities depend on the individual dog and situation. It’s essential that foster parents understand that shelter dogs may be stressed and moving the dog from the shelter to the foster home is also very stressful and emotional. Foster parents must be willing to be patient and commit to the dog because our goal is to keep them in a stable and consistent environment.

Many of the dogs at the shelter are “adolescent” dogs between the age of 6 months and 2 years. They typically have a lot of energy and require vigorous daily exercise. This means at least a 30-45 minute brisk walk/run in the morning and again in the afternoon, with plenty of play time in between. Older dogs may only need a morning and evening stroll.

Daily Hours (estimate)	
Most Common Dogs with a cold	2-3 hours
Anxiety in a kennel	2-3 hours
Weaned puppies	3-6 hours
Injured dogs	2-3 hours
Orphaned puppies	8 hours
Behavior cases	2-4 hours
Mom with puppies	3 hours
Cruelty victim	3 hours

If additional health problems develop, daily hour commitments may be extended. For example, foster parents may have to transport their foster animals to the vet during regular business hours.

*14. Can I take my foster dog to an off - leash dog park for exercise and socialization?*

No. You are not allowed to take any foster dog from BARC to an off-leash dog park. While these parks can be fun for some dogs, there are far too many unknowns for it to be a safe and healthy experience for a foster dog. Diseases are easily transmitted and the temperaments of visiting dogs are unknown. Also, taking a leashed dog to a dog park can create barrier frustration and aggression in dogs.

*15. How can I help my foster dog become more adoptable?*



There are two ways to make a foster dog more adoptable. First and foremost is marketing. If no one knows about your foster dog, or how wonderful it is, then it will be next to impossible to find them a forever home. In addition to supplying great photos and a bio and updating these regularly, giving a foster dog additional exposure by telling friends and family about them will help create a “network effect” and will speed up the process of finding a forever home. Simple steps like taking a foster dog on walks in local parks, outdoor shopping areas and other high-traffic areas will help find potential adopters.

Secondly, our orphaned dogs benefit greatly from the exercise (with the exception of those with some medical conditions), basic training, special love and attention you give them. While marketing provides you with applicants, it's **always** the dog that “closes the deal.” Providing a foster dog with basic training and manners will increase their adoptability. Shy dogs will benefit from your patience, routine and slowly exposing them to new people to build their confidence. Rambunctious adolescents who learn good manners will help show off their trainability and long term potential. And while puppies are adorable, they need a lot of love, attention and hand-holding from humans to develop properly and feel secure.

*16. Am I responsible for finding my foster dog its forever home?*

No, but we do need your help. Once a qualified applicant is identified, you will be asked to schedule a meet and greet with your foster dog and the potential adopter. Your quick response and then final input on the potential adopter is critical to finding a great match. Many times a foster parent will find a perfect match through their own network of friends, family and colleagues. The shelter greatly welcomes these referrals! If you think you have found a perfect forever home for your foster dog, remember they still must go through the application process and be approved by the shelter staff.

*17. Can I return my foster dog to the shelter if I am unable to foster any longer?*

We prefer that foster parents continue to foster until we find a permanent home for their foster dog. It's extremely stressful for a dog to be returned to the shelter environment. However, we understand that situations change and it may become necessary to discontinue fostering a dog. We request that a foster parent provides as much notice as possible (minimum 3-4 weeks) so that we can find an alternative foster home to transfer the dog to. Of course, in an emergency a foster parent may always bring their dog back to the shelter.

*18. What if I go on vacation or have a business trip?*

If given enough notice, we can usually find volunteers that can foster sit for short durations. We ask that foster parents always keep BARC staff aware of any temporary foster sitting situations.

*19. Are foster dogs ever euthanized?*

Much energy, love, time and vet care is devoted to our foster dogs, and the shelter is committed to finding homes for ALL the adoptable dogs within its care. Some dogs are in foster care because they're seriously ill or injured. If, after medical attention, these dogs are too young or too weak to heal and are suffering, then the shelter staff will humanely euthanize these animals. Fortunately, most dogs in foster care heal beautifully. On rare occasions, a dog in foster care may start to exhibit potentially dangerous behavior that was unknown or suppressed when the dog was at the shelter. The shelter may determine that this dog is too dangerous and will

humanely euthanize the animal or seek an alternative facility for its care. Your safety is our #1 priority. You must always inform the shelter staff if your foster dog exhibits any aggressive behavior.

## **Thank You!**

We would like to thank you for choosing to participate in our program. Fosters are a valuable asset to our organization and to the many animals that need loving homes. BARC provides a multitude of services to the residents and animals of the City of Houston, including sheltering animals, spaying and neutering adoptable animals, animal control services, low cost micro-chipping, and pet licensing.

This manual has been prepared for you as a reference guide. It contains information regarding our Foster Policies and Procedures as well as general information about BARC. We are very grateful to have you as a part of our team. We hope that your affiliation with BARC will be extremely rewarding. You can have a huge impact on the lives of homeless animals in our community. The support of fosters is critical to the success of BARC and the fulfillment of our mission. We look forward to collaborating with you and finding every dog and cat a forever home!